



# IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & WELFARE

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **IDAHO CHILDHOOD IMMUNIZATION RATES HIT NEW HIGHS**

Idaho's key measurement for determining how many children are fully immunized jumped nine percent in 2003, according to figures from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta.

Idaho's rate increased from 69 percent in 2002 to 78 percent in 2003 for children 19-35 months of age who are fully immunized. Full immunization is based on five kinds of vaccines at different doses. The vaccines are for diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), *haemophilus influenzae* type b (HIB), and hepatitis B.

Idaho's rate brings it to one percentage point below the national average, but higher than neighboring states like Utah, Washington and Oregon. "We're very pleased to see the increase," says Dick Schultz, administrator for the Department of Health & Welfare's Division of Health. "It means that Idaho children are safer from diseases that can have a life long impact."

Idaho's rate remained low for several years, but the Department of Health & Welfare, local health departments, hospitals, physicians, nurses and others have made immunization a very high priority. That priority is supported by Governor Kempthorne who put childhood immunization high on his list of goals when he took office.

"The increased rate is even more impressive when you realize the requirements to meet full immunization have increased substantially," says Schultz. "Full immunization used to be three types of vaccine. Now it's five types of vaccine over the first three years of a child's life."

Even under the original standard Idaho's rate went up — almost nine percent from 2002 to 2003. Based on the standard requiring three vaccines, Idaho's immunization rate is nearly 83 percent.

“The increase in both categories is directly the result of all parties working together,” says Trisha Hosch-Hebdon, immunization program manager. “When you have this kind of team work, keeping that high level of commitment and awareness is a lot easier. And kids who are fully immunized against childhood diseases are the winners.”

**(Editors: For additional information contact Ross Mason in Boise at 334-0693.)**